9-29 (Rev. 11-3-69)

Tolson
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MITCHELL ASSURES NEWSMEN ON FILES

Will Seek Agreements With Mass Media Before Any Subpoenas Are Issued

Text of Mitchell's statement will be found on Page 40.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5—Attorney General John N. Mitchell said today that the Justice Department was taking steps to assure that no subpoenas would be issued to members of the news media without an attempt first to reach agreement on the scope of the subpoenas.

The statement issued by Mr. Mitchell followed criticism by the media over the issuance of wide-ranging subpoenas to news organizations that had investigated the activities of radical political groups.

Officials of The New York Times, the Columbia Broadcasting System, Time Inc., and Newsweek had expressed concern that the Government's attempts to obtain the raw files of newsmen could dry up reporters' news sources by disclosing the names of confidential informants.

Each of these companies had been the subject of grand jury subpoenas demanding such raw data as reporters' notes, tape recordings, news film and unedited files. The subpoenas were issued by grand juries that were investigating the actions of the Weatherman faction of the Students for a Democratic Society and the Black Panther party.

Media Still Concerned

By HENRY RAYMONT

Reactions to Mr. Mitchell's statement yesterday were marked by continued concern in the news media over the vulnerability of the journalist in protecting confidential sources.

Norman E. Isaacs, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, was among those who said he believed the current controversy remained unresolved, despite Mr. Mitchell's suggestion that the Justice Department would not insist on obtaining all the material it had demanded from newsmen in a recent series of subpoenas.

Mr. Isaacs, who is editor of The Louisville Courier-Journal, said the society was pressing ahead with a plan to join with any newspaper prepared to resist the disclosure of confidential files in the courts.

Commenting on Mr. Mitchell's remarks in a speech prepared for delivery at the University of Kentucky, Mr. Isaacs said:

"It may be helpful for the moment. But I'm of the old school which feels that you can almost never trust the Government or politicians about what they're going to do next."

A number of executives from some of the news organizations that received subpoenas for unedited files and filmsn in connection with Government investigation of radical groups such as the Black Panther party expressed doubt that the Justice Department's apparent change of heart represented a real change in policy.

C.B.S. Awaits Proof

Richard S. Salant, president of the C.B.S. news department said: "Mr. Mitchell's statement is very nice to have but the proof of the pudding will be how much more specific and restrained the Government will be and how far it is going to go in trying to protect newsmen and in taking into account the free flow of information."

Mr. Salant had opposed a Federal subpoena issued last week for both used and unused portions of a C.B.S. film on the Black Panthers. Today he said he hoped the Mitchell statement did not simply mean that Justice Department officials in the future would be "more courteous" in their discussions with lawyers representing the news media.

The Washington Post
Times Herald
The Washington Daily News
The Evening Star (Washington)
The Sunday Star (Washington)
Daily News (New York)
Sunday News (New York)
New York Post
The New York Times
The Sun (Baltimore)
The Daily World
The New Leader
The Wall Street Journal
The National Observer
People's World
Examiner (Washington)

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